

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 OMB-01

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R 232003Z JAN 76

FM AMEMBASSY PORT AU PRINCE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1391

INFO AMEMBASSY SANTO DOMINGO

AMEMBASSY KINGSTON

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 PORT AU PRINCE 0214

FOR ASSISTANT SECRETARY ROGERS

EO 11652 GDS

TAGS: PFOR, HA, US

SUBJECT: CURRENT HAITIAN PERCEPTION OF THE U.S.

REF: STATE 010605

1. AMBASSADOR ISHAM APPROVED FOLLOWING RESPONSE JUST BEFORE HIS DEPARTURE FOR A FEW DAYS' LEAVE:

2. WHILE ITS RELATIONSHIP TO THE U.S. REMAINS BY FAR THE MOST IMPORTANT DIPLOMATIC AND ECONOMIC TIE FOR HAITI, KEY HAITIANS HAVE SELDOM LOOKED UPON THIS RELATIONSHIP AS DEPENDING SIGNIFICANTLY ON VICISSITUDES OF U.S. POLICY EITHER ON DOMESTIC U.S. SCENE OR IN OTHER REGIONS OF WORLD, FROM WHICH HAITI HAS TRADITIONALLY FELT VERY REMOTE. ACCORDINGLY, WE HAVE NOT SENSED MUCH REASSESSMENT AMONG ARTICULATE HAITIANS ON QUESTIONS RAISED IN REFTTEL.

3. LESSONS OF RECENT HISTORY IN THE IMMEDIATE CARIBBEAN SUB-REGION HAVE UNDOUBTEDLY CONTRIBUTED TO GROWTH OF MORE REALISM IN HAITI ABOUT OVER-ALL ABILITY OF U.S. TO CONTROL

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EVENTS OR TO IMPOSE ITS WILL. OUR EXPERIENCE WITH CASTRO SINCE 1959 HAS CERTAINLY CONTRIBUTED TO THIS REALISM, AND

PROBABLY ALSO OUR OPEN DEMONSTRATION IN THE MID-1960'S OF PIQUE AT FRANCOIS DUVALIER'S REGIME (WHICH PROVED TO BE IN VAIN, AT LEAST IN ANY DIRECT SENSE). OUR SUBSEQUENT INTERVENTION IN THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC, VIEWED IN RETROSPECT, PROBABLY LEAVES AMBIGUOUS IMPRESSIONS IN HAITI AND IS NOT FREQUENTLY MENTIONED. FOR ALL THIS, WE ARE FAR FROM BEING REDUCED TO A "PITFUL, HELPLESS GIANT" OR EVEN TO AN "UNRELIABLE PATRON" IN HAITIAN EYES. KEY HAITIANS SEEM TO CONTINUE TO BELIEVE, FOR EXAMPLE, THAT U.S. WOULD NOT STAND IDLY BY IF SOME NEW ATTEMPT SHOULD MATERIALIZE IN THE SUB-REGION TO IMPOSE A COMMUNIST-TYPE REGIME BY FORCE.

4. THE FOLLOWING RESPONSES ARE KEYED SPECIFICALLY TO SECTION A THROUGH J IN PARA 2 OF REFTEL:

5. (A) THERE MAY BE SOME FURTHER DIMINUTION IN HAITIAN PERCEPTION OF U.S.'S QUASI-OMNIPOTENCE IN THE PAST, BUT NOT TO A DEGREE SIGNIFICANT FOR CONDUCT OF HAITIAN FOREIGN POLICY AND OF ITS RELATIONS WITH THE U.S.

6. (B). FORMAL U.S. COMMITMENTS (E.G. THE RIO TREATY) DO NOT PLAY A SIGNIFICANT ROLE IN HAITIAN THINKING ABOUT U.S. OBLIGATIONS. THESE ARE VIEWED MORE IN TERMS OF MORAL OBLIGATIONS, E.G. TO RESPECT SOVEREIGNTY (ESPECIALLY OF SMALL NATIONS), TO PROVIDE ECONOMIC AND HUMANITARIAN AID, AND TO PROVIDE SOME DEGREE OF PROTECTION AGAINST PREDATORY OR OPENLY AGGRESSIVE NEIGHBORS OF DIRECT CONCERN TO HAITI. THUS, THE OUTCOME IN REMOTE VIETNAM, WITH ALL THE AMBIGUITIES WHICH DEVELOPED IN OUR INTERVENTION THERE, HAS NOT LED ARTICULATE HAITIANS TO ANY CLEAR-CUT CONCLUSIONS ABOUT OUR RELIABILITY. WE SENSE THAT KEY HAITIANS BELIEVE U.S. WOULD ACTIVELY INTERVENE IN THIS SUB-REGION IN THE EVENT OF A FLAGRANT USE OF FORCE ACROSS NATIONAL BORDERS OR, AS NOTED ABOVE, IN AN UNAMBIGUOUS ATTEMPT TO ESTABLISH A NEW COMMUNIST REGIME BY FORCE.

7. (C AND D). PERCEPTIVE HAITIANS HAVE CONSIDERABLE UNDERSTANDING OF U.S. POLITICAL PROCESSES, AND DO NOT REGARD SASSES BETWEEN ADMINISTRATION AND CONGRESS AS ANYTHING NEW. PARTI-

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CULARLY FOR DUVALIERIST REGIME, CONGRESSIONAL INFLUENCES HAVE LONG BEEN REGARDED AS NEGATIVE FACTOR IN RELATIONS, OR AT LEAST AS ELEMENT OF UNCERTAINTY (E.G. LEGISLATIVE RESTRICTIONS ON FOREIGN ASSISTANCE EXTENDING INTO AREAS OF THEIR PRIZED SOVEREIGNTY). DESPITE WHAT IS CURRENTLY GOING ON IN WASHINGTON, THERE HAS BEEN A SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCE AFFECTING HAITI: GOH HAS CLEARLY BEEN IMPRESSED BY ADMINISTRATION'S ABILITY, WITH HELP OF SENATOR BROOKS, TO OVERCOME SIGNIFICANT POCKETS OF CONGRESSIONAL RESISTANCE TO OUR REVIVED PROGRAM OF OFFICIAL

COOPERATION WITH HAITI. AS FOR OUR FOREIGN POLICY INITIATIVES SPECIFICALLY DIRECTED AT LATIN AMERICA, HAITI DOES NOT CARE ALL THAT MUCH, SINCE IT HARDLY FEELS IT IS REALLY A MEMBER OF THAT CLUB. HAITI ATTACHES MUCH MORE IMPORTANCE TO OUR RECENTLY-ANNOUNCED ECONOMIC POLICIES TOWARD THE THIRD WORLD, AND TOWARD THE POOREST COUNTRIES IN PARTICULAR (SEE SECTION J BELOW), AND WILL BE KEEPING AS CAREFUL A WATCH AS IT CAN ON OUR ABILITY TO DELIVER PROMISED MEASURES IN THE COMPLEX AREA OF POLICY AND PERFORMANCES -- SO MUCH OF IT INVOLVING MULTILATERAL ACTION REQUIRING THE COOPERATION OF OTHER DEVELOPED COUNTRIES. SO FAR, WITH VISIBLE GROWTH IN BILATERAL U.S. ASSISTANCE AND RECENT ACHIEVEMENT OF GSP, HAITIANS GENERALLY ARE NEITHER DISCOURAGED NOR UNDULY SKEPTICAL AT THIS TIME.

8.(E). TO SUMMARIZE TRADITIONAL HAITIAN ATTITUDES TOWARD U.S. SINCE OUR OCCUPATION (1915-34), HAITI HAS BEEN CONVINCED OF OVERRIDING IMPORTANCE OF U.S. FOR HAITI'S FUTURE DEVELOPMENT, BUT OCCASIONALLY WORRIED ABOUT OVER-DOMINANCE BY U.S. IN SOME AREAS (CULTURAL AS WELL AS COMMERCIAL). QUITE INDEPENDENTLY OF U.S. VICISSITUDES, AND CONCURRENTLY WITH THE GRADUAL RESUMPTION OF ECONOMIC GROWTH AND WITH THE EASING OF DOMESTIC POLITICAL TENSIONS, CURRENT HAITIAN REGIME HAS SOUGHT GREATER DIVERSIFICATION IN ITS FOREIGN RELATIONS. THIS, HOWEVER, IS LARGELY A QUEST FOR A VALID NATIONALISTIC PROFILE, FOR GREATER PRESTIGE (PARTICULARLY IN THIRD WORLD) AND FOR A BROADER ENSEMBLE OF FOREIGN COOPERATION, RATHER THAN REPRESENTING ANY REAL SHIFT IN HAITI'S PERCEPTION OF WHERE ITS STRONGEST FOREIGN INTERESTS LIE OR ANY DESIRE TO DISENGAGE FROM RELATIONS WITH U.S.

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9.(F). ALWAYS DISTRUSTFUL OF CASTRO AND OF COMMUNISM
GENERALLY, MOST HAITIANS SEE THEIR SUSPICIONS CONFIRMED BY
CUBAN INVOLVEMENT IN ANGOLA. THOUGH NO HAITIAN VIEWS ABOUT
U.S. COUNTEREFFORTS HAVE BEEN EXPRESSED IN PUBLIC HERE,
WE SURMISE THESE ATTEMPTS HAVE SERVED TO REINFORCE UNDERLYING
HAITIAN BELIEF, MENTIONED ABOVE, THAT CONTAINMENT OF COMMUNIST
EXPANSION REMAINS IMPORTANT TO U.S., AND THAT U.S. DESERVES
DIPLOMATIC SUPPORT OF SMALL INDEPENDENT NATIONS IN ITS EFFORTS
TO CHECK SOVIET DESIGNS. ON ANGOLA AS AN AFRICAN ISSUE, HAITI
IS HIGHLY SENSITIVE ABOUT SOUTH AFRICAN INVOLVEMENT AND
PRESUMABLY HAS CONCERNS ABOUT HOW U.S. VIEWS THAT INVOLVEMENT;
CONSEQUENTLY, HAITI MAY BE EXPECTED TO ACT CAUTIOUSLY IN UN, NOT
NECESSARILY VOTING IN PARALLEL WITH U.S.

10.(G). HAITI EMPHASIZES STRONGLY THE BILATERAL WAY OF DEALING
WITH U.S. GOH IS SKEPTICAL ABOUT THE LATINIS' COLLECTIVE
REGIONAL METHOD OF NEGOTIATING WITH U.S., REGARDING THIS
APPROACH AS LARGELY OPPORTUNISTIC, UNLIKELY TO TAKE SPECIAL
INTERESTS OF HAITI INTO ACCOUNT, AND PRONE TO CONFRONTATIONAL
TECHNIQUES WHICH WOULD BE ESSENTIALLY UNPRODUCTIVE. AT SAME
TIME, HAITI DOES NOT WANT TO BE "ODD MAN OUT" AND WILL PRESERVE
A LOW-KEY PRESENCE IN REGIONAL COOPERATIVE ARRANGEMENTS,
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THINKING PERHAPS INITIALLY OF FURTHER GAINS WHICH MAY BE MADE
BY LA AND CARIBBEAN REGARDING USE OF NATURAL RESOURCES.
HAITIANS MIGHT GRADUALLY ASSUME A LARGER ROLE IN ORGANIZATIONS
SUCH AS SELA IF THE ORGANIZATION DISPLAYS MORE REALISM THAN IT
HAS THUS FAR AND IF THEY SHOULD JUDGE THAT THIS KIND OF PARTICIPATION
IS WORKING OUT WELL FOR THEM.

11.(H). GENERALLY, HAITI WISHES TO AVOID OPPOSING U.S. IN THE UN,
AND SEEKS TO CONCERT ITS POSITION CLOSELY WITH OURS.
IN THE LATE 1950'S, HAITI EVEN TRIED TO TRADE ON THIS POSTURE IN
SEEKING AID AND OTHER CONCESSIONS FROM U.S, ALTHOUGH NOWADAYS
THERE IS NO HINT OF SUCH BLACKMAIL, AND THE HAITIANS TAKE PRIDE
IN THEIR RECORD OF ALIGNMENT WITH US IN THE UN. HOWEVER, HAITI
IS NOT IMMUNE TO THE NEEDS OF MAINTAINING A NATIONALIST IMAGE OR
TO THIRD-WORLD PRESSURES -- PARTICULARLY ON AFRICAN AND
LATIN AMERICAN ISSUES -- AND THIS IS BOUND TO RESULT IN FURTHER
ABSTENTIONS OR ABSENCES BY HAITI WHEN FACED BY UNCOMFORTABLE
DILEMMAS. ON BALANCE, HOWEVER, HAITI'S VOTING RECORD HAS
BEEN HELPFUL TO U.S. INTERESTS, AND WE SENSE NO FEELING IN
KEY HAITIAN CIRCLES THAT A SUBSTANTIAL HAITIAN MOVE TOWARD

A DIFFERENT VOTING PATTERN WOULD BE BENIGNLY TOLERATED BY U.S. OR COULD BE UNDERTAKEN WITHOUT COST TO KEY BENEFITS IN BILATERAL RELATIONS WITH U.S.

12.(I). THOUGH IT SEEKS SOME ENLARGEMENT AND DIVERSIFICATION IN ITS FOREIGN RELATIONS (SEE E ABOVE), AND IN RECENT YEARS HAS STRONGLY PLAYED THE FRANCOPHONE CARD, GOH CLEARLY BELIEVES THERE EXISTS NO OTHER POWER WHICH COULD EFFECTIVELY SUBSTITUTE FOR THE U.S. AS PROMOTER OF HAITI'S DEVELOPMENT AND SECURITY. THOUGH IT HOPES FOR SOME COMPETITION OVER FUTURE DEVELOPMENT OF HAITIAN NATURAL RESOURCES BY FOREIGN FIRMS (E.G. FRENCH PENNAROYA VS U.S. KENNECOTT IN NEW COPPER MINING VENTURES) AND WILL SEEK TERMS COMPARABLE TO WHAT NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES WILL GET (E.G. THE JAMAICAN FORMULA ON REVENUES FRM BAUXITE), HAITIAN STILL REGARD U.S. INDUSTRY AS THE MOST PROBABLE ENGINE OF NATURAL RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT IN HAITI. SINCE HAITI NEEDS NEW FOREIGN INVESTMENT AND INCREASED FOREIGN TRADE SO ACUTELY, IT IS NOT LIKELY TO DISCRIMINATE SIGNIFICANTLY AMONG PARTNERS. IN ANY CASE, U.S. MARKET IS A NEARBY REALITY AND OBVIOUSLY OFFERS HAITI ITS BEST OPPORTUNITIES.

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13.(J). HAITI HAS BEEN IMPRESSED BY U.S. LEADERSHIP ON PROBLEMS OF DEVELOPING NATIONS (UNGA'S SEVENTH SPECIAL SESSION AND ENSUING DELIBERATIONS) AND HAS BEEN ENCOURAGED BY CONCRETE SIGNS OF GREATER U.S. ATTENTION TO PLIGHT OF LEAST-DEVELOPED COUNTRIES. THERE MORE MATURE HAITIAN DO NOT EXPECT SPECTACULAR OR IMMEDIATE RESULTS, IN VIEW OF EXTENDED -- AND INTERRUPTED -- BILATERAL HISTORY OF U.S. OFFICIAL ECONOMIC COOPERATION, WHICH HAS RAISED ISSUES OF FOREIGN INVESTMENT (REGARDED BY SOME HAITIANS AS EXCESSIVE) AS WELL OF LIMITED GOH ABILITY TO DO ITS OWN PART ON JOINT DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS THOROUGHLY AND CONSISTENTLY OVER TIME. AT THE SAME TIME, GOH SEEMS TO HAVE NO ILLUSIONS THAT A "NEW INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC ORDER" WOULD SOMEHOW ACCOMPLISH MORE RAPID ECONOMIC CHANGES IN HAITI, LEAVING HAITIANS FREE TO DO THINGS THEIR TRADITIONAL, UNPRODUCTIVE WAY. ON BALANCE, DESPITE THE RECENT PROLIFERATION OF ITS SOURCES OF FOREIGN ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE AND DESPITE SOME TEMPTATION TO PLAY OFF THESE COMPETING DONORS AGAINST ONE ANOTHER, HAITI STILL LOOKS TO THE U.S. AS ITS PRIME OUTSIDE SOURCE OF IMPETUS FOR ACUTELY-NEEDED MODERNIZATION AND DEVELOPMENT, AND IS MORE ENCOURAGED ABOUT U.S. POSTURE THAN IT HAS BEEN FOR MANY YEARS.

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